

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation. How? well, less variety equals fewer independent perspectives. More independent perspectives equals more healthy debate on the issues and a better democracy. More consolidation equals fewer perspectives. More consolidation makes us more like communist China or fascist Germany or any number of government controlled propaganda machines. Only in this case, it is not government, but the Sinclair group, a for-profit company whose bottom line is money and not democracy.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard.

There can be no improvement in our democratic institutions if we do not encourage various and independent voices to report our news. Learning cannot happen in a conversation if only one voice is heard - or if one is heard so much louder than any others.

Thank you.